

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

OPERATION ODYSSEY DAWN

AND

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

by

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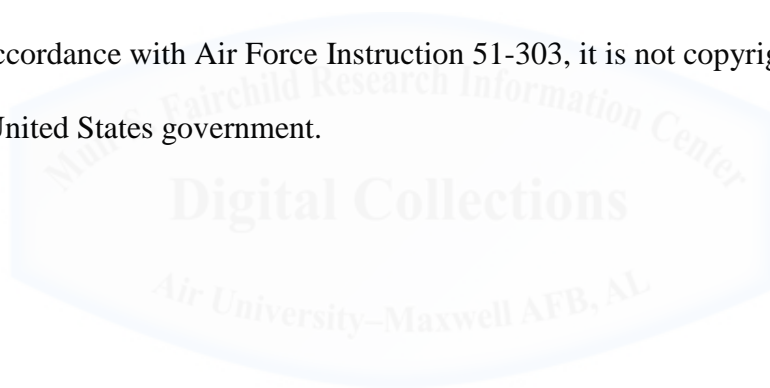
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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Joel Carey is a student assigned to the US Air Force Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from Baylor University in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics and Air Command and Staff College in 2006 with a Masters of Military Operational Art and Science. He is a command pilot with over 2600 hours in the T-37, T-38, F-111, EF-111 and F-15C including 335 combat hours. He is a graduated squadron commander, has served at the numbered air force and major command staff and has deployed multiple times in support of Operations DELIBERATE FORCE, PROVIDE COMFORT, NORTHERN WATCH, SOUTHERN WATCH and AFCENT's Theater Security Package.



Abstract

When the Arab Spring blew through the Middle East in early 2011, leaders toppled in Egypt and Tunisia and sat nervously in countries from Jordan to Yemen, awaiting the outcome of a growing uneasiness moving throughout the region. As this desire for change hit Libya, Qaddafi and his loyalists set out to crush the movement in a bloodletting none would forget. Sensing the volatile situation, the international community raised a cry for action. After a series of talks among world leaders who articulated their own nuanced interests regarding the dilemma, a series of United Nations Security Resolutions mandating action were passed.

In a coalition with French and British forces, the US effort to protect Libyan civilians was initiated under the name Operation ODYSSEY DAWN with the British element labeled Operation *Ellamy*. Established to "take all necessary measures" to protect civilians and to police a no-fly zone over the country, the coalition quickly had a positive impact on the rebel movement and then shifted under NATO leadership with the moniker of Operation Unified Protector.

The effort was widely considered an overwhelming success due to the decisive effects delivered by friendly forces, all with zero coalition loss of life. Many then began to question if this was now the template for future humanitarian intervention? The answer from most of those directly involved is "no". However, through careful examination of the geopolitical environment, policy decisions, and the operation itself, policy makers are provided with several useful tools for the future.

Introduction

On 19 March 2011, as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and British Prime Minister David Cameron joined French president Nicolas Sarkozy at the Elysee Palace for a private meeting during the G8 Summit, Sarkozy informed them that French combat aircraft were en route to the Libyan coast. Soon thereafter, Rafale and Mirage aircraft from the Armee d l'Air (French Air Force) as well as US B-2 bombers and a myriad of US and British cruise missiles struck Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's regime in a display of international resolve in support of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1973.¹ These missions did not receive wholehearted support from across the global community, but even the most jaded of critics will find it hard to argue their effect. Had coalition partners failed to intervene in the north African country, Qaddafi's forces just outside the rebel stronghold of Benghazi would have most likely succeeded in his goal of cleansing Libya "house by house" of the thousands of insurgents he labeled as "rats."² Amidst the mosaic of international opinion, policy, alliances and history, the decision to intervene in another country's sovereign borders is seldom met with consensus, but this instance came closer than most.

Initially a US-led coalition with French and British forces, the US portion of the intervention into Libya in March 2011 was known as Operation ODYSSEY DAWN (OD). After the opening phases, the effort transitioned from U.S to NATO leadership and was conducted under the label Operation Unified Protector (UP) until the NATO Secretary General announced the end of a "successful" mission on 31 October 2011.³ As the first bombs of Operation OD found their targets, the body of literature by scholars examining the effort from a geo-political context down to the tactical details, has steadily grown. One of the topics consistently entering

the discussion is whether or not Operations OD and UP serve as models for the future of armed humanitarian intervention.

When asked whether Libya might be a template for wars of the future, Army General Carter Ham, Commander, United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) said, "It would be wrong, in my opinion, to say this is now the template,...the model that we will follow. All military operations are...condition-specific."⁴ Although Libya may not present the ultimate model for the future, the specific "conditions" General Ham mentions, the backdrop of the decision making, and the operation itself continue to be invaluable resources. The following text will examine the unique nature of the intervention in Libya including the setting of early 2011, the political climate both in the US and abroad, the forces, organization and conduct of the operation, and lastly, present several key recommendations for the future.

The Mission in Libya

Qaddafi and the Arab Spring

The spring of 2011 brought with it the winds of change throughout the Middle East. Not too long after the world witnessed the toppling of Saddam Hussein with the 2003 invasion of Iraq, this new season saw the determined masses craft an abrupt and conspicuous end to the political lives of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Tunisia's Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali.⁵ Leaders from Jordan to Yemen seemed to be at risk of the same fate. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described the people's movements for reform in the Middle East and North Africa as "'the shifting of tectonic plates that have been frozen in place for six decades,'...followed by a 'tsunami of change across the region.'"⁶ Libya would be part of this changing sea state.

In an attempt to join the regional wave of change and discard decades of oppressive rule under Qaddafi, Libyan rebels made their move in mid-February 2011. Seizing the initiative,

rebels overtook loyalist forces and captured the cities of Benghazi and Zawiyah, establishing what would become precarious strongholds. Instead of cowering at the thought of an impending overthrow in his country as in Egypt and Tunisia, Qaddafi's and his loyalist Libyan forces regained momentum from the rebel forces in a brutal wave of counterattacks.

The international community repeatedly voiced their disapproval of Qaddafi's heavy-handed approach. In early March, the International Criminal Court launched an official investigation into the widely reported atrocities committed by the regime as the rebels began to lose their momentum. After members of the international community both individually and jointly made repeat appeals to stop the bloodshed, the UN Security Council generated a pointed press-release making the same request. Undeterred, Qaddafi's supporters made no secret of their desires to commit wholesale murder of the separatist forces trapped in the cities of Benghazi and Qadhafi.⁷ The situation for the Libyan opposition movement had become dire by mid-March as loyalists re-conquered the oil port of Ras Lanuf in eastern Libya and lunged in the direction of the rebel stronghold in Benghazi. Qaddafi's son Saif al-Islam confidently proclaimed that the loyalist forces would soon "thwart the revolution" and announced "no negotiations with the rebels but a war to the end."⁸

Qaddafi and the US

Within the context of the Arab Spring and the threat to many of his regional contemporaries, why did Qaddafi maintain such a hard line approach? Many attribute this to his well-documented, brutal survival instinct. Although his record would indicate this to be at least partially to blame, evidence also points toward Qaddafi potentially not having quite the same expectations of an impending fall from power due to recent patterns he had seen in his relationship with the US leaders. Only nine months earlier in 2010, US Ambassador Gene Cretz

described the Qaddafi regime as a "strategic ally" of the US in the wake of Libyan cooperation on counterterrorism and nonproliferation issues. Recent cooperation in the US effort against al Qaeda had in ways overshadowed the crimes of the past.⁹ Following George W. Bush's deepening troubles in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, his administration perpetuated this feeling of goodwill toward Libya with a noted shift away from forcible regime change to regime rehabilitation. The new approach postulated a "rehabilitated" Libyan regime would then cultivate liberalization within their country, help US interests remain intact and lay the groundwork for future democratization. Optimistic in theory, unrealistic in hindsight, this approach found its test bed in Libya after Qaddafi renounced state support for terror activities and ended his budding weapons of mass destruction program.¹⁰

The warming overtures resonated with the US Congress as well, revealed by the former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Lantos stating, "I am very proud of America's success in convincing Qaddafi to become a decent citizen of the global community...Our engagement with Qaddafi and the prosperity it has brought Libya serves as a model to countries currently sponsoring terror or compiling weapons of mass destruction. They should know that they, too, can come in from the cold."¹¹ With this obvious thaw in US relations, combined with an American military being thinly stretched between two wars, it is somewhat easier to rationalize why Qaddafi may have believed his situation was indeed different than the others embroiled in the Arab Spring.

Rise of the International Mandate to Act

As the Libyan loyalists continued to press down upon the rebels, the international discourse began taking shape around the growing concept of "responsibility to protect" or "R2P." An ongoing discussion for over two decades, R2P was the manifestation of international disdain

for the horrors of the 1990s in Rwanda, the Balkans, and Darfur where states were either unable or unwilling to protect their people's basic human rights. Argued to be just the latest in the evolution of the centuries-old "just war theory," the concept of R2P was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005 and provided the moral argument, or "just war" premise for international intervention. An extremely controversial approach, R2P was seen to violate what many nations believed to be the sovereign rights of the state. However, the "sovereignty" argument began to ring hollow as stories of genocide and other atrocities of the last decades became more widely known. The R2P philosophy, it was argued, did not dismiss the notion of national sovereignty, but broadened it to mean that each state had more than rights within their territory--they had an obligation to protect their people. When this requirement is neglected, international action may be warranted in the form of humanitarian aid, sanctions, or even military intervention.

Due to the multiple dissenting views within the UN claiming R2P to be on shaky ground, potentially undercutting the stabilizing role of sovereign states on international order, the idea remained as a General Assembly resolution and lacked the legal weight of one originating from the Security Council.¹² In spite of the debate and concern regarding the concept, R2P appeared well suited for the case in Libya, where a populace engaged in an internal struggle against a brutal sovereign. Therefore, on 26 February, the UNSC decided to levy UNSCR 1970 which imposed an arms embargo and froze Qaddafi assets held overseas. UNSCR 1970 also called for an end to the violence, urged Libyan authorities to respect human rights, permit the safe passage of humanitarian supplies, and lift restrictions imposed against the media--all in an attempt to send a clear signal to the regime that they must desist.¹³

As loyalists continued their attacks in spite of UNSCR 1970, the international community moved again. The Arab League suspended Libya from its sessions in late February and cried out for the establishment of a no-fly zone. African leaders such as Rwanda's President Kagame pitched in with support, and French and British leaders readied for stiffer measures. As a result, despite abstention from five UNSC members, UNSCR 1973 was passed on 17 March with even tougher language. Maintaining the language of UNSCR 1970 regarding cessation of violence, the arms embargo, and freezing the regime's assets, 1973 added authorization to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya. Additionally, after much debate, the UN included the following paragraph entitled "Protection of civilians" which states "The Security Council,..."

Authorizes Member States that have notified the Secretary-General, acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements, and acting in cooperation with the Secretary-General, to take all necessary measures, notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970 (2011) [arms embargo], to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory, and requests the Member States concerned to inform the Secretary-General immediately of the measures they take pursuant to the authorization conferred by this paragraph which shall be immediately reported to the Security Council.¹⁴

Regardless of broad skepticism toward the phrase "all necessary measures", Russia and China both avoided use of their inherent veto powers as permanent members, thereby bridling their longstanding view that the UN should not use force to infringe on the sovereignty of a state.¹⁵ Additionally, the phrase "acting nationally or through regional organizations or arrangements" became problematic as the looser language failed to clearly establish a command structure, significantly impacting expeditious, coordinated planning.¹⁶ Imperfect as it was, and without warm support from several countries including Germany and Turkey, the UN had its mandate to act and the French and British would lead the European pack.

However, this mandate was far from static and the interpretation of R2P began to change with regard to Libya. President Obama and his military leaders stated the mission on 19 March as: "...first, to prevent further attacks by regime forces on Libyan citizens and opposition groups, especially in an around Benghazi; and second, to degrade the regime's capability to resist the no-fly zone we are implementing under the United Nations resolution."¹⁷ But soon, the mission grew to mean even more. In a letter signed by Obama, Prime Minister Cameron, and President Sarkozy one month into the operation and after the handoff to NATO leadership, they communicated continued resolve against Qaddafi, and went further than UNSCR 1973 to state "it is impossible to imagine a future for Libya with Qaddafi in power."¹⁸ Late in June, Obama stated more clearly, interestingly in a joint interview with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, that Qaddafi must step down, hand over power to the Libyan people, and "the pressure will only continue to increase until he does."¹⁹

Dissenting voices claimed this was an alarming form of mission creep, or worse yet, disingenuous maneuvering to achieve a goal of regime change some countries wanted from the beginning. As to the charge of "mission creep", the alliance had ruled out explicitly stating regime change as a goal from the onset, but many held to the quiet belief that any effort to protect Libyan civilians that did not remove Qaddafi from power was doomed to failure.²⁰ As to the claim of some countries being less than forthright with their initial intentions, that may have some merit. In 1999, members of the Clinton administration engaged with other members of the UN to voice strong opposition to linking future NATO military actions to explicit UN authorization. But in 2011, this link was put into effect, giving permanent members of the UNSC with veto authorities, including Russia and China, unfortunate influence over NATO activities. For those who determined regime change was a necessary action, they likely

recognized any mention of such goals would put UN discussions into gridlock, and would have definite motive to veil their intent while working toward a UNSCR.²¹

The American Equation

The American viewpoint on R2P, and specifically, intervention in Libya was similarly conflicted. In line with the optimism during Bush's presidency, little had been spoken to counter the warming trend in Libyan relations within Obama's administration, including no apparent attempt to paint Qaddafi's regime as a US security threat. However, as the mood of the Arab Spring hit Washington, and reports of the Libyan regime's actions arrived, the administration changed course. Many policymakers wondered whether Obama was now shifting to a post-realist paradigm "where governments' treatment of their citizens, as opposed to their geopolitical conduct, is more important as a factor for US policy?"²² Proponents of such a shift claim that "realism is hardly suitable for the changing regional landscape confronting Washington today, that America needs a foreign policy based on values, and that embracing and encouraging rapid political change throughout the Middle East is both necessary and desirable."²³ Even as Secretary Gates and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen questioned the wisdom of militarily intervening in yet another Muslim country, the executive branch continued on flight path with the UNSC. R2P would have help from the Americans.

Operations

With an undeniable, although ambiguous mandate in hand, the allies had the green light. As the default regional military coordination element, NATO started to corral planning resources to develop an agreed-upon way ahead while the US, France, and UK also leaned forward in accordance with national prerogatives. As opposed to the 1999 air war over Kosovo that slowly crept toward air strikes on significant economic, communications, and transportation targets in

an "escalation of force", planners for Libyan operations were tightly bound by rules of engagement (ROE) focused on protection of the people with minimal collateral damage, ever mindful of a desire to get the country back on its feet as quickly as possible after hostilities.²⁴ On 3 March, shortly after UNSCR 1970 was published and several days after US and British air forces began assisting with civilian evacuations, US Africa Command (USAFRICOM) established Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn (JTF-OD) under the command of Admiral Samuel Locklear and commenced planning in earnest for the US contribution to the intervention. Initially focused on humanitarian assistance, evacuation of third-country nationals, maritime exclusion, and the potentiality of a no-fly zone, planners were challenged by a lack of current plans for Libya. Resulting from a focus on Iraq and Afghanistan and years of warming relations, contingency plans were outdated by at least a decade and planners resorted to doctrinal guidance from the Joint Operation Planning Process (JOPP) to guide their efforts.

Due to expected mission sets, the 18 US officers on the initial planning team were primarily from the Air Force and Navy. They joined 10 foreign liaison officers from Italy, France and the UK at Naples, Italy and then moved aboard the USS Mount Whitney in the Mediterranean where the team finalized the initial JTF-OD concept of operations.²⁵ Meanwhile, as the politics of full NATO involvement were underway, US, British, and French air planners had already joined at NATO's Air North headquarters at Ramstein Air Base, Germany to determine initial command and control and strike plans for any future air operations. In a three-week effort beginning on 26 February, coalition and joint planners including personnel from both US Air Forces Africa's 617th Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) and US Air Forces Europe's 603d AOC generated the air plan to aid in enforcing UNSCR 1973. Under the command of Major General Maggie Woodward, 17th Air Force Commander, the team crafted a

plan including an opening wave of French aircraft supporting Benghazi followed by US and British cruise missiles from naval assets, US B-2 strikes from their home bases, and Storm Shadow strikes from the UK.²⁶ Once approved by national leadership, the forces waited for the go-ahead.

After UNSCR 1973 was finalized on 17 March, and while Qaddafi's forces marched even closer to rebel strongholds, Sarkozy stole the moment on 19 March at the G8 Summit in Paris by announcing that French Rafale aircraft had begun strikes on loyalist forces outside Benghazi.²⁷ Although criticized as bent toward the dramatic, the operations that followed could not have come soon enough for the rebels. Inability of the coalition to prevent Qaddafi's forces from entering Benghazi would have precipitated failure in the basic mission of protecting thousands of Libyans and robbed the coalition of a critical support base in the eastern side of the country.²⁸ Major General Woodward revealed later, "I remember all of us being terrified that we wouldn't be able to turn them back in time and that they would overrun the city, and we just couldn't even imagine the massacre that would ensue."²⁹ "At the beginning," she also said, "I thought we may have been given the mission too late."³⁰ Her perception was widely shared.

From the French, British, and US perspective, the situation on the ground dictated immediate action that air power could provide, and unfortunately, NATO's command structure was unprepared to respond quickly enough. Under Woodward's command from the AOC at Ramstein, the 17th Air Force staff, greatly assisted by 3rd Air Force, coordinated assets in the first 24 hours of Operation OD that destroyed 22 of 24 fixed air defense sites in Libya. In contrast to common practice in western air power doctrine, the coalition not only struck at the heart of the integrated air defense system (IADS) in the opening volley, they struck directly at the heart of the hostile ground forces as well.³¹ In response to Washington's initial insistence on

establishing the no-fly zone without kinetic strikes, JTF leadership effectively communicated the "extremely high risk" of such an approach, and was able to destroy air defenses as required to support the fight on the ground.³² After the first 24 hours, aircraft from the US, France, and UK struck another set of targets, and in the days following, were assisted by aircraft and crews from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, Qatar, and Spain.³³ Eager to hand over the lead and play a supporting role due to domestic political imperatives, the US relinquished command to NATO on 31 March after 13 days of destroying much of Qaddafi's fixed military infrastructure, and Operation OD gave way to Operation UP. However, since the NATO CAOC in Poggio Renatico, Italy charged with taking the lead from Ramstein had significant communications issues at handoff, the 603d AOC continued much of their role for a few days after the 31 March handoff.³⁴

Force Challenges

Although the mission successfully repelled the loyalist forces from Benghazi, the slow decision for the US to support with combat forces led to subsequently slow force provision. As a political debate raged in Washington to determine the US role in Libya, the air planners, JTF-OD staff and AFRICOM submitted their force requests in order to conduct a no-fly zone in accordance with UNSCR 173. Although validated by the Joint Staff, political approval did not occur in time for operations. The inherent nature of AFRICOM's air arm (17th Air Force) not possessing organic air forces clearly put them in a challenging position preparing for the impending fight. In the absence of forces through the formal "request for forces" process, AFRICOM was "loaned" the required assets from European Command's USAFE. As enemy forces closed in on Benghazi, B-2 aircraft from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri launched without written orders and received the final go-ahead six hours into the mission. The highly

capable Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft were also unavailable for the challenging first strikes. Missing their capabilities, fighter aircrew were required to serve as a kind of forward air control air battle manager, sequencing and de-conflicting flights in addition to finding and identifying their own, often difficult targets.³⁵ In the wake of these challenges with force allocation, USAFE Commander General Mark Welsh stated that "Libya demonstrated the value of forward presence." Maj Gen Woodward followed with, "We talk all the time about ...global reach, and I think we become a little bit insular by saying, 'Well, we can do everything by reachback,'...OD was a 'wake-up call...If we didn't have forward basing, I feel very confident that we would not have prevented' the slaughter threatened for Benghazi."³⁶

Coalition partners also presented several notable lessons for future operations. The French demonstrated the stand-off capability of their armement air-sol modulaire (AASM) precision guided munition (PGM) used on their Rafale fighter aircraft, and the UK employed their similar Brimstone weapon with success.³⁷ Likewise, non-NATO contributors such as Sweden with their ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance)-capable Gripen aircraft, and the Arab nations of Qatar, Jordan, and the U.A.E. contributed to the air and ground battle. In addition to flying no-fly zone missions and ground strike (Qatar and U.A.E.), all three Arab nations contributed in other key ways. Qatari intelligence forces served in and around Tripoli, Jordanians monitored social networking sites, and the U.A.E. built and operated an airstrip in Libya for the purposes of humanitarian aid.³⁸ However, along with the somewhat puzzling abstention of German forces, all was not well within the coalition. At a parting speech to NATO ministers, the outbound Secretary Gates "chided them for having insufficient inventory of weapons--a symptom, he said, of NATO countries' failing to spend enough on their military

forces."³⁹ Although British and French officials denied any reports of depleted stocks affecting the mission, Gates was unconvinced. Additionally, as the US president showed haste in wanting to "hand over" leadership of the operation to NATO, some in NATO found this unsettling as Americans appeared to be distancing themselves from a traditional leadership role in NATO. Finally, as the operation transitioned to Unified Protector, the US became a participant with significant "caveats"--providing critical support aircraft, but withholding strike assets.⁴⁰

AFRICOM headquarters also found the intervention to be quite taxing. Designed for training and advising rather than leading air campaigns, the headquarters was lacking in kinetic targeting experience according to General Ham.⁴¹ Although individuals within the command had accomplished these core tasks in other theaters, the command itself was not proficient in the mission. Ham continued to say one of the biggest lessons "for me and for the headquarters and the staff is: Combatant commands don't get to choose their missions ...Geographic combatant commands must be full-spectrum commands...We must always retain the capability to do the higher-end operations."⁴²

Recommendations

Force Mixture

Debate among US and world leaders continues regarding how best to spend defense funds in a challenging fiscal environment. Following a counterinsurgency in Iraq and while still combating irregular forces in Afghanistan, many valuable lessons have been captured regarding both how to conduct and prepare for irregular warfare. Countries see the importance of maintaining a cadre of elite forces able to execute special operations around the globe ranging from direct action to foreign internal defense in order to shape areas in accordance with national interests. Although special forces will remain a critical element of the defense structure, Libya

provides a case for continuing development of conventional air forces for future operations. In Libya, coalition forces were able to rapidly respond in support of separatist ground forces, providing them the precise, tactical edge required to regain momentum in the war. Coalition forces that had invested in precision-guided weapons were able to contribute, and those that could not were either excluded or given other duties.

The years of investment in ISR platforms and the ability to conduct air-to-air refueling made this possible. However, NATO countries have begun to rely extensively on the US for these capabilities in particular, reflecting the growing disparity between the average 1.6 percent of GDP spent by Europeans and the four percent spent by the US for defense. In Libya alone, the US provided 75 percent of the ISR data and 75 percent of the air refueling platforms required for mission completion.⁴³

Additionally, airpower continues to provide the unique capability, when applied in the right context, to intentionally confine intervention to the technological, standoff dimension. It will not provide a strategic panacea professed by Douhet, or a replacement for land power's unique capabilities, but a key tool to enable an "offshore balancing" coercive tool for statecraft that requires minimal boots on the ground. It would have been incredibly difficult to achieve the zero-casualty rate the coalition maintained, keep costs relatively low (\$1.1B for the US), and prevent the wholesale massacre of the Libyan separatists without these capabilities.

NATO Leadership

As the US continues to leverage multilateralism to share cost and increase effectiveness of foreign policy, we must find innovative means to maintain our leadership position in NATO, or accept the costs of playing a reduced role. More than garnering the theatrical limelight with his pronouncement at the beginning operations, Sarkozy represented an emerging role for the

French as leaders in NATO. To many a welcome addition to defray the disproportionate expenditures by the US through the years, this increased role begets increased influence in the process. As many of the critical missions were still accomplished by US forces, the conspicuous shift to non-combat missions and "handing over" the mission to NATO was definitely not wholesale dismissal of the US role in NATO, but it was noticed and sent a mixed message. If the US defers a leading role in NATO operations, who will take the role? If France's willingness to work directly with the UK bilaterally in maintaining the integrity of an air campaign, unhindered by NATO's Northern Atlantic Council (NAC), and then drop the first ordnance in anger are any indication...are they a potential candidate?

In addition to the potential for reduced operational influence, a shrinking US role in NATO operations may also risk leadership in technology. In order for a country to capitalize on synergistic effects, many have adopted US technology and doctrine. If that trend changes, there will potentially be costs for US defense industry as well. That said, even with the US playing a supporting role in a predominately Franco-British mission after transition to UP, the French Air Force General Abrial said NATO's European air forces "could not have performed to the same level of effectiveness without heavy contribution from the US."⁴⁴

Forward Presence

One author's take on "the critical lesson" from Operations ODYSSEY DAWN and Unified Protector "is that there's simply no substitute for forward deployed forces."⁴⁵ He may be correct. In addition to PGMs, tankers, ISR, data link, and the myriad of other technologies that fuel air power, forward basing and engagement are critical. Forward basing gives US assets persistent access to support missions abroad with reduced response time. As Major General Woodward mentioned, waiting for the response of AFRICOM's request for forces would have

meant mission failure for her team. Forward basing also injects servicemen consistently into interoperability exercise opportunities with nearby countries that are difficult to achieve from stateside bases. This face-to-face interaction improves mutual understanding, commonality in techniques, and forges relationships key to reducing the inevitable fog and friction at the start of any contingency. AFRICOM participation in Exercise AUSTERE CHALLENGE with their joint and allied partners was credited with better preparing the staff for OD. Additionally, forward presence improves a broader understanding of regional intelligence concerns, patterns of life, and key indicators for decision makers. Strong DoD advocacy of these concepts with Congress is critical to continually remind key legislators, often seeing overseas basing as competition for their constituents' dollars, of the high costs of neglecting this resource.

Conclusion

Though Operations ODYSSEY DAWN and Unified Protector reminded us of lessons of past conflicts and offered useful insights into a changing world, they should undoubtedly be examined in the context of their unique conditions. Intervention in Libya occurred with generally favorable world opinion, UN credibility, multinational participants, and in support of an indigenous populace eager to fight on the ground for their future. However, several themes from this story warrant careful consideration as leaders ponder future policy decisions. Modern, capable conventional air forces continue to have a key role in a world along with their unconventional counterparts, US defers a leadership role in NATO at a cost, and although expensive, there is no substitute for forward deployed forces.

Notes

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- ³⁶ Ibid, 35.

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³⁹ Tirpak, 37.

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